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**Decentralization in Metro Toronto:
Is It Being Threatened?**



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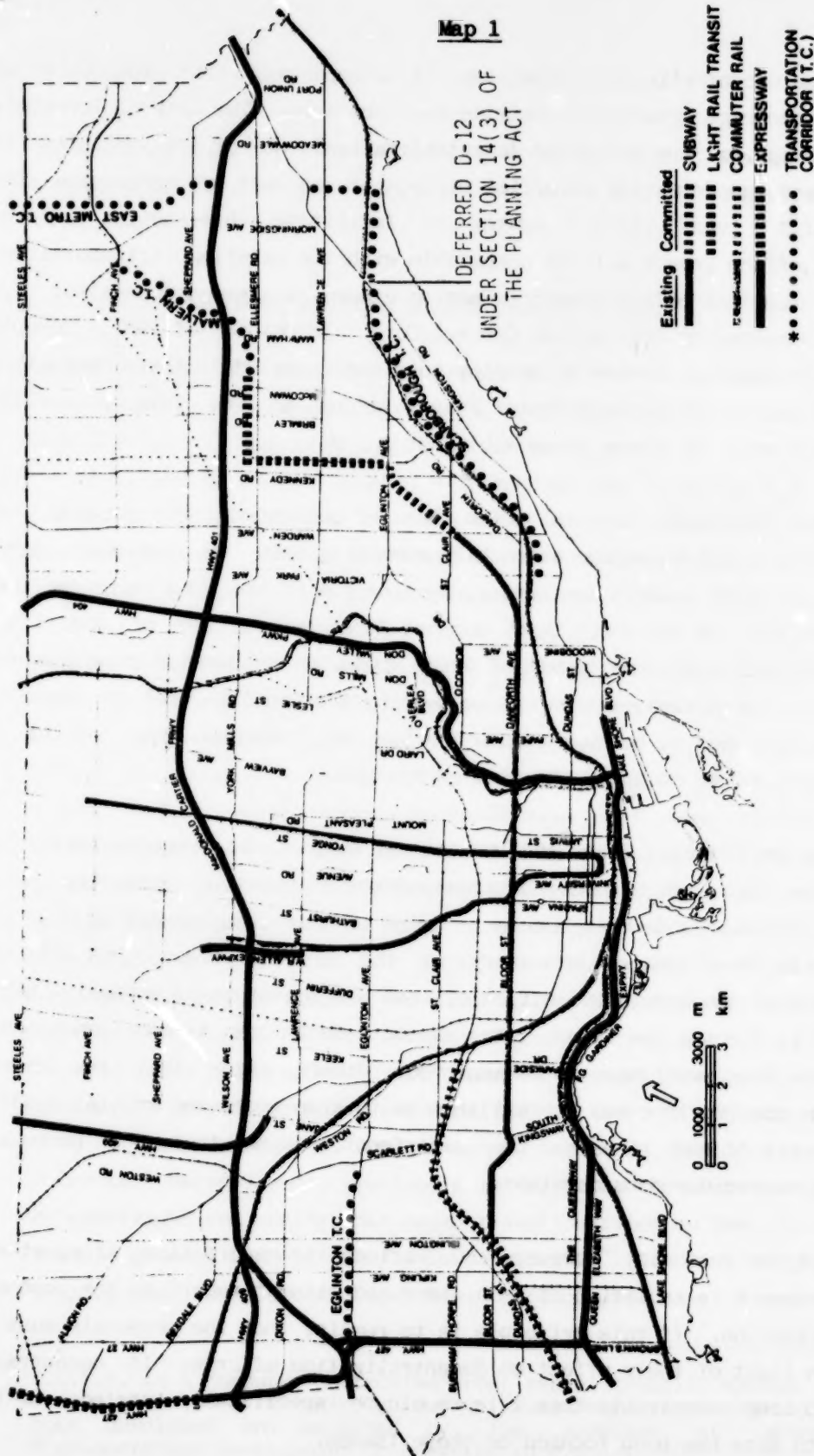
I INTRODUCTION

The principle of decentralization inherent in Metropolitan Toronto's Official Plan may be slowly eroding. There appear to be several influences at work, both at the Provincial and local levels. The focus of these issues is on transportation in the Metro area. There are proposals which could, conceivably, lead to a clear concentration of growth in the central area of Toronto - in direct contravention of the underlying principle of Metro's Official Plan.

During the 1970's an elaborate planning scheme was put in place, which eventually culminated in the approval of an "Official Plan for the Urban Structure of Metropolitan Toronto". After countless background studies, involving a great deal of citizen participation, the Plan was finally approved in October 1980 (subject to further modification). According to this Plan, the fundamental aim is "to create a multi-centred urban structure" i.e. decentralization (p. 15). This is to be effected by encouraging Metropolitan Centres along rapid transit facilities, with particular emphasis on North York and Scarborough as major centres. At the same time, the Plan recognizes the significance of the central area of the City of Toronto as the Metropolitan Centre for business, cultural, governmental, recreational and management activities.

Decentralization is seen as being beneficial to the entire Metro area. In a report in 1977 entitled "Is Metroplan a Gamble Worth Taking?", the Bureau identified numerous benefits which could come from decentralization - "an enriched economic and social base for the suburbs, more opportunity for people to live closer to their jobs, less congestion downtown and a more balanced demand on the transit system, supported by two-way ridership." The emphasis is on developing a more balanced region where the opportunities are more dispersed and the requirements in areas such as transportation would be lessened.

Transportation, in fact, plays a large role in whether the objective of decentralization can be achieved since new lines can shape the growth of areas. The Plan notes that the expected growth by 2001 should not require any additional major transportation facilities (p. 15). In particular, one of the objectives of the Plan is that Council "shall not support construction of additional rapid transit lines into the Central Area" (p. 34). Map 1 shows the major transportation facilities that were approved in the Plan.



MAJOR TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

*NOTE

1. Refer to Section 6, Sub-section G concerning transportation corridors.
2. The status of the Scarborough T.C. and the Malvern T.C. is as follows:
Scarborough — The Cabinet has directed the O.M.B. to hold a new public hearing for the purpose of reconsideration of the Corporation's application for approval to use proceeds from the sale of properties acquired for the former Scarborough Expressway to acquire lands to complete the corridor.
Malvern — Public agencies have been requested to protect the right-of-way; no commitment has been made to build any fixed rail transit facility within the corridor.

Source: Official Plan for the Urban Structure - Metropolitan Toronto

To achieve this decentralization objective, it is important that the City of Toronto also encourage development outside the core area. The City of Toronto's Official Plan supports the notion of decentralization. One of its policies is to promote the deconcentration of office employment, in part by encouraging the development of the transportation system to facilitate this notion and by ensuring that office growth will be compatible with the existing transportation system. It notes that office growth is not to exceed an aggregate total of 7.0 million square metres by 1991 in the Central Core. In October of 1981, Toronto completed a Quinquennial Review to monitor this and concluded that "council's objectives as expressed in the Official Plan relating to the rate of office growth in the Central Core are being achieved" (p. 98).

In particular, Toronto's Official Plan has a policy of discouraging any activities which would encourage automobile commuting into the downtown core. With respect to rapid transit facilities, Section 7.5 of the Plan indicates that Council should not, in the short term, support "the construction of additional major transit facilities, the result of which would be to increase significantly the capacity of the transportation system serving the Central Core" (p. 97). The road network is deemed to be appropriate and the only changes that should be made are those that would speed the flow of traffic.

Despite these two Official Plans and the general support for decentralization in the Metro area, there are a number of transportation proposals currently being reviewed which could erode this concept. There is some disagreement as to why these proposals are viewed as necessary at the present time. One of the arguments is that the cumulative effect of land use decisions is suddenly being realized and is forcing the issue; to support decisions already made, new transportation lines will have to be approved. Others argue that the direct pressure from the Province and its willingness to give increased capital funding for the approval of such lines as the waterfront, deems that the proposals should be given serious consideration.

Regardless of the reasoning, however, the various transportation alternatives are being reviewed in isolation of each other and without regard to the concept of decentralization. If this principle is to remain, then the proposals must be evaluated in light of their effect on decentralization efforts. If decentralization is no longer desirable then this should be specifically stated. Little discussion to date has been focused on these issues.

II ISSUES

As noted earlier, there are several activities underway which might lead to a weakening of the concept of decentralization. A brief description of each of these follows.

1. Province of Ontario - I.C.T.S./Central Waterfront

In the fall of 1977 the Province indicated to Metro that the central waterfront would be an appropriate area in which to establish its Intermediate Capacity Transit System (I.C.T.S.).¹ However, since the Federal Government was unwilling to provide some of the funding, the issue was not pursued. On January 27, 1981, when the Province announced the industrial expansion program for Ontario through the Board of Industrial Leadership and Development Committee (B.I.L.D.), the project re-surfaced.

Ontario indicated in its publication, Building Ontario in the 1980's, that it would "in concert with Metro Toronto, . . . launch an I.C.T.S. in Toronto" (p. 14). This system is to run from Union Station to the recreational and tourist attractions on the waterfront, including Ontario Place, the refurbished C.N.E., the new Thomson Hall, CN Tower and Harbourfront Park. The estimated cost is in excess of \$100 million, of which the Province has committed to pay \$90,000,000 and expects Metro to contribute \$10,000,000. (This is \$15 million more than the Province normally gives.) An attempt is to be made to gain contributions from those who will benefit from the installation, i.e. land owners, developers and major users. A link to Malton was also to be explored. In June, 1981 the Province indicated that any B.I.L.D. funding for the waterfront proposal would not preclude normal Provincial transportation funding. A project proposal was submitted to Metro in October 1981, a copy of which was forwarded to Toronto on October 30, 1981 for comment. Also in October, Metro Toronto received a letter from the Province re-affirming the commitment and urging that rapid transit service on the central waterfront be given a high priority. On November 27, 1981, the City of Toronto Planning and Development Department recommended that a needs study be

¹ I.C.T.S. is a computer-controlled urban rapid transit system using light weight vehicles on elevated guideways, with many unique features. It has been developed and marketed by the Province of Ontario's Urban Transportation Development Corporation (U.T.D.C.).

included in the first stage of the proposal (corridor determination) and that any further steps for the second phase (functional design) would require approval of both Metro and Toronto. City Council adopted these and related recommendations on December 3, 1981. The City also recommended that no support should be given to a study unless it complied with the relevant sections of the City's Official Plan regarding transportation/deconcentration (7.3(a), 7.3(b), and 7.5). This is, however, subject to interpretation. On January 20, 1982, Metro's Economic Development and Planning Committee deferred the I.C.T.S. proposal until the Accelerated Rapid Transit Study (A.R.T.S.), discussed below, had been completed. It directed that system-wide implications of a waterfront I.C.T.S. line be part of the evaluation of corridor options in the A.R.T.S. study.

2. Metro/T.T.C. Rapid Transit Study (A.R.T.S.)

This study resulted from several activities. In January, 1980, Metro Council adopted a recommendation of the Metro/T.T.C. Transit Policy Committee giving higher priority to transit, in general, in Metropolitan Toronto. In mid-1980 the Toronto Transit Commission indicated that there had been a recent reversal of rapid transit ridership patterns. Instead of the expected decline, there was an increase, which had lead to operating problems on the system. It requested a transit study in order to facilitate the preparation of capital works programs.

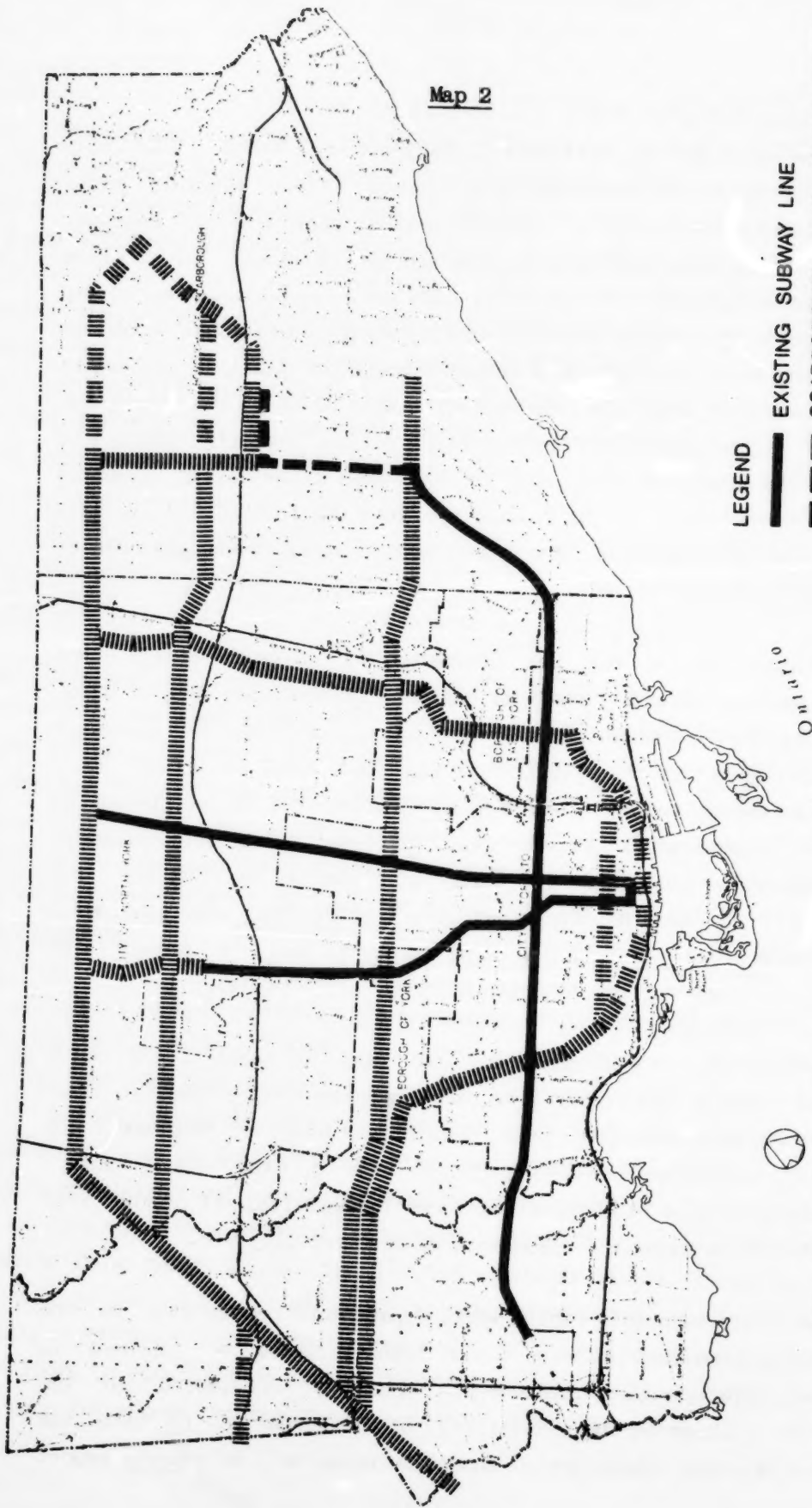
A joint report of Metro Planning, Metro Roads and Traffic and the T.T.C. was submitted to the Toronto Transit Commission and the Economic Development and Planning Committee in February, 1981. It indicated that conditions had, indeed, changed since the Official Plan had been approved, including such things as rising ridership, expanding non-residential construction, increasing population and increasing employment opportunities (in the Metropolitan Region). It also noted that recent Provincial policy statements, including those relating to the I.C.T.S. waterfront line and increased subsidies to the T.T.C. for electrically powered vehicles, had an impact on changing conditions. The report recommended that the transit study process noted above be accelerated. On May 12, 1981 Metro Council approved terms of reference and a work program for an accelerated transit study.

The result of the above was the Metro/T.T.C. Rapid Transit Study (A.R.T.S.), completed in May, 1982. It evaluated both "build" (four possible rapid transit alternatives) and "no build" (surface transit improvements) options. Map 2 shows the rapid transit options studied and Map 3 shows the surface transit improvements options. It concluded that the radial line shown on Map 2 is the only option that would alleviate the existing operational problems on the Yonge line, south of Bloor, and at the Yonge/Bloor Station. The main recommendations were that two new rapid transit lines be approved in principle, i.e., a "'relief line' from Union Station to the Danforth subway in the vicinity of the Greenwood yards and an east-west line along Sheppard Avenue from the Yonge subway to the Scarborough Town Centre . . ." (p. 38). Each line will cost \$400,000,000. The report adds that it is questionable if either line will be needed by 1991.

The I.C.T.S. waterfront line was not evaluated in as much detail, but considered as a policy issue and its implications, system-wide, were studied. Background Report No. 6 constitutes an investigation, although at aggregate levels, of future demand in the waterfront area. The A.R.T.S. study notes that "it does not appear that a waterfront line is required on the basis of serving transportation demand. Nevertheless, increased levels of development in the post-1991 period could generate sufficient demand to justify this facility" (p. 24). It also indicates that this line can only be considered in conjunction with other facilities serving the core, i.e., "a radial line from the east . . . (connecting) to Union Station. . ." (p. 31).

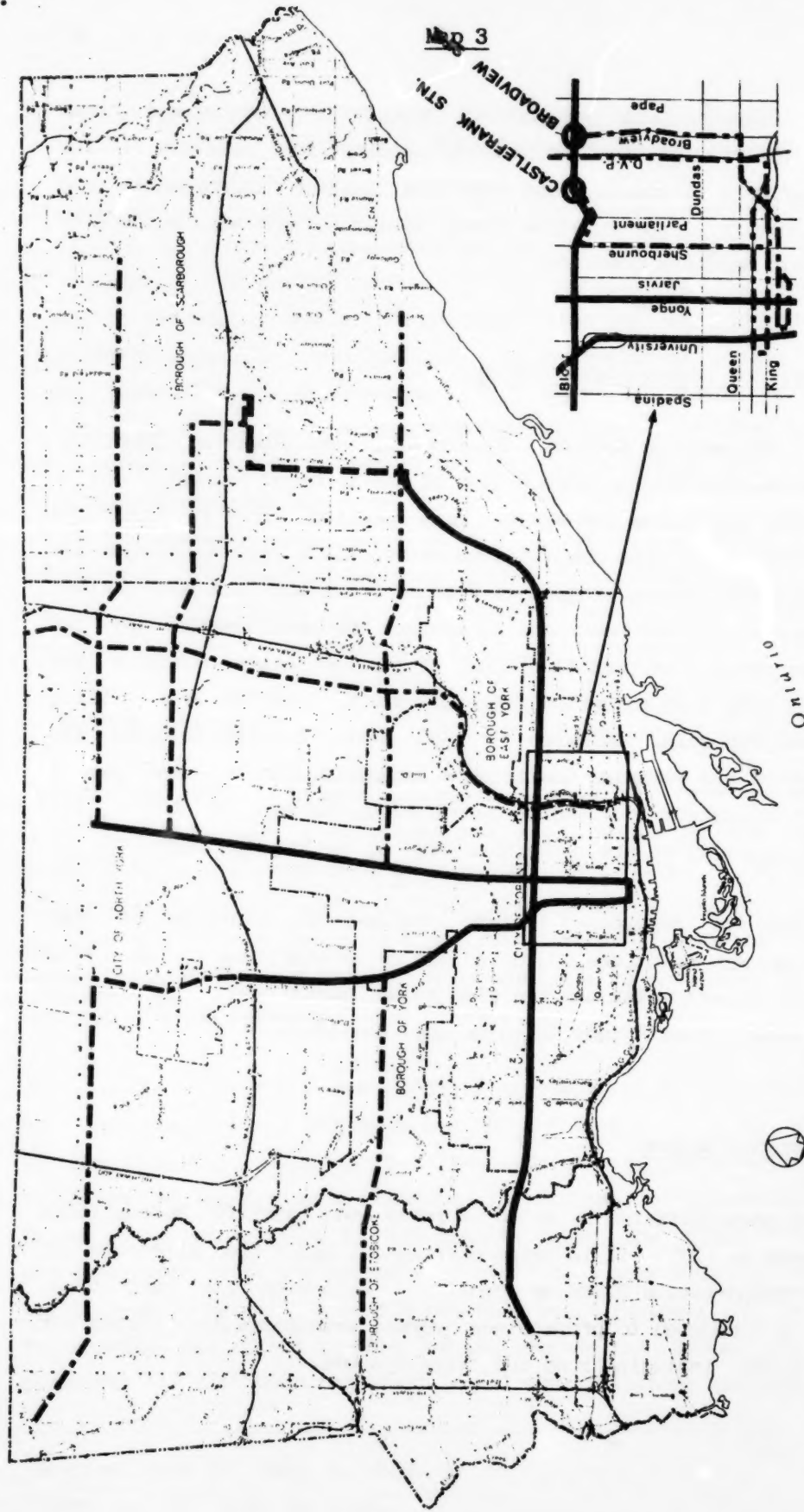
Feasibility studies are to be done on the two rapid transit lines noted above, with the I.C.T.S. waterfront line to be included in the "relief line" study. The report suggested that this "should include an assessment of possible westerly extensions of a waterfront line to the Bloor subway" (p. 37). At the same time, the report has been forwarded to all of the area municipalities, with a request for comments by December 31, 1982.

On September 9, 1982, Toronto's Public Works Department recommended to the City Services Committee that no new rapid transit lines be approved in principle, that surface transit improvements should be considered for the central area and a report on the feasibility of measures to increase the capacity of the existing subway system should be prepared. An interim report



RAPID TRANSIT OPTIONS

Source: Metro/T.T.C. Rapid Transit Study - Summary Report



LEGEND

— EXISTING SUBWAY

- - - SCARBOROUGH I.C.T.S.

... OPTIONAL SURFACE IMPROVEMENTS

OPTIONAL SURFACE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

Source: Metro/T.T.C. Rapid Transit Study - Summary Report

of the Toronto Planning and Development Department recommended that consideration of the "relief line" be deferred pending the results of the Public Works Department recommendations regarding surface improvements and increasing the capacity of the existing subway system. These were adopted by the City of Toronto Services Committee.

3. Don Valley Corridor Transportation Study

On September 30, 1981 Metro's Economic Development and Planning Committee adopted a recommendation for the preparation of the terms of reference of a Don Valley corridor transportation study. This resulted from an extensive traffic analysis which had been completed by Metro, T.T.C. and North York for the North York Concorde Square project at Wynford Drive and the Don Valley Parkway. Recommendations had been made to improve the road system and the need for a longer range transportation study of the Don Valley corridor was identified. East York also requested that the study look at the traffic impact of various proposals. On March 2, 1982 Metro Council adopted the Economic Development and Planning Committee's recommendation to undertake a study of the Don Valley corridor, to be completed by the end of 1982. All affected area municipalities are to be consulted on an on-going basis.

The proposed terms of reference include medium-term solutions of road widenings and long-term solutions could include major additions to the road system. Optional transit solutions are also to be identified. Information from the Accelerated Transit Study is to be made available.

4. Metro Roads System Review

A study has also been initiated by Metro Toronto to identify Metropolitan Toronto road needs to 1991. It is being carried out under the direction of the Technical Transportation Planning Committee. Following its completion, this committee is scheduled to prepare new overall transportation plans for Metropolitan Toronto, including road and transit needs.

5. Central Area Traffic Management Study: Yonge Corridor Traffic Impact and Transit Optimization Study (Metropolitan Toronto and the City of Toronto)

The objectives were two-fold: i) to consider the implications of narrowing or closing Yonge Street between College/Carlton and Temperance Streets; and ii) to improve north-south surface transit operation in the downtown. Included in the Summary and Recommendations dated May 18, 1982 were several significant proposals. One dealt with the narrowing of certain sections of Yonge Street. The second proposal dealt with the issue of adopting an "arterial frame" of University Avenue/Gerrard/Jarvis and Front Streets. This was to provide alternative routes for the traffic which had been diverted from Yonge Street and their use was to be encouraged to either by-pass or access the downtown area. A public meeting was held on August 11, 1982. On September 9, 1982 the City Services Committee recommended to the Toronto City Council the narrowing of Yonge Street but did not support the arterial frame concept. It also recommended that additional proposals be studied further.

6. Spadina Expressway

In August of 1975 the Provincial Cabinet stopped the Spadina Expressway at Eglinton Avenue. The Province is committed to acquiring the Spadina lands south of Eglinton, owned by Metro, leasing them back to Metro, with the stipulation that they cannot be used for road or highway purposes, and granting the City of Toronto a three-foot strip across the route of the former expressway. Toronto is also to receive a 99-year lease of the ravine lands within its boundary.¹

The Province presented a draft leasing agreement to Metro in March 1982. It also indicated that if the agreement had not been executed by May 1, 1982, the Province would begin expropriation proceedings. Metro advised them that since part of the arrangement is that the Highway 400 extension (Black Creek Drive) is to be exchanged for the Spadina lands, the final transfer should not take place until the uncompleted section of that road is completed and transferred to Metro. This will probably be in October or November 1982. The Province has agreed to this.² Metro advised the Bureau that the draft agreement has also been forwarded to all municipalities for their comments.

¹ Hansard, June 18, 1982, p. 2859.

² Ibid., May 10, 1982, p. 1603.

III SUMMARY

From the foregoing it can be argued that there are several forces at work which could tend to negate the notion of decentralization which is inherent in the Official Plans of both Metropolitan Toronto and the City of Toronto. All of the relevant activities are transportation-oriented.

The Province of Ontario is urging Metro to establish a high priority for the introduction of an I.C.T.S. line on the waterfront from Union Station to Ontario Place, for which it has pledged \$90,000,000. As a result of a 1980 request from the Toronto Transit Commission, and the urging of Metro's Economic Development and Planning Committee, a rapid transit study has recently been completed. It recommends that two new rapid transit lines be approved for Metropolitan Toronto, in principle. One of these lines, the "relief line" is a part of a larger radial line which focuses on Union Station. The radial line is deemed to be the only one which can alleviate the Yonge subway congestion problem. In addition, it has been noted that the I.C.T.S. waterfront line, although not entirely necessary, can only be built if accompanied by another transit line. This is in direct contravention of Metro's Official Plan.

A major study is being completed on the Don Valley Corridor, which could mean road widenings and major additions to the road system. Recent proposals have suggested that in return for permission to narrow Yonge Street, the City of Toronto has been requested to approve an "arterial frame" concept, consisting of University Avenue, Gerrard, Jarvis and Front Streets. The proposal includes the widening of certain sections of Gerrard and Jarvis Streets. Furthermore, a complete review of the Metro road system is underway and will include both road and transit considerations for the next decade. And, finally, there is the unfinished story of the Spadina Expressway. In 1975 a political decision was made to stop this roadway at Eglinton Avenue. But, in the fall of 1982 the final legal agreements have not been completed, albeit the reasons for this appear to be of a technical nature.

IV IMPLICATIONS

There are various questions which must be asked with respect to the above. The most pressing question is whether or not the concept of deconcentration of Metropolitan Toronto is being eroded. Any new rapid transit lines or additional major transportation facilities which would encourage travel to the downtown core are in direct contravention of the overall goals of the Metro Official Plan. They could also be considered, in some cases, against the overall intent of the Toronto Official Plan. The proposed "relief line", and the radial option, in particular, are examples of this. Should the Don Valley Parkway undergo widening and/or major additions, this will facilitate downtown traffic. A downtown "arterial frame", with widened roadways, will do the same.

Another question is why a total review of roads and transit is being done, given that extensive studies were undertaken prior to decisions regarding Metro's Official Plan. More particularly, what will happen to the notion of deconcentration if it is decided to include more roadways and rapid transit to facilitate the downtown area?

Yet another question is why the Province is insisting on an I.C.T.S. waterfront line, when it has been recognized that this will have to hook up to a new downtown rapid transit line - thus putting Metro in a position where it will be obliged to construct one. And, what might happen if the Spadina issue is not resolved soon? What if, for various reasons, the legal agreements are not finalized soon? What if Premier Davis decides to leave the Provincial Legislature? Could the Spadina become a viable option again? What would this mean to the notion of deconcentration?

It does, indeed, appear that the deconcentration principle of Metro's Official Plan, and Toronto's too, is being chipped away by various forces. Perhaps it is not a viable concept which can deal with the realities of an urban system like Metropolitan Toronto. In the 1977 review of the Metroplan document Concept and Objectives, the Bureau noted that "there is good reason to doubt the feasibility of decentralization. Nevertheless, we agree with those planners and politicians who believe we should try" (p. 9). Have we given it a good try? Are we being told, subtly, that it isn't working? If this is the case, don't we have a right to know?

If, on the other hand, the deconcentration theme is still deemed to be viable, several key factors, and their inter-relationship, must be clearly understood. First of all, the politicians must be able to envisage it. Secondly, they must be conscious of the impact their decisions will have on the implementation of the concept. Thirdly, there must be a consensus on how their success is to be measured. Is it by facts and figures regarding development projects, by policy decisions on transportation issues, a combination of the two, or by other means? Metro and local politicians must come to terms with these complex and interdependent variables if the planned urban structure of Metropolitan Toronto is ever going to be transformed from the dream to reality.

c Bureau of Municipal Research
October 1982

Mary Lynch, Executive Director
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